critical digest

VOL. V No. 3 September 22, 1952

The Weekly Newsletter Digest of the Current New York Theatre Scene

October Play Schedule

An Evening With Beatrice Lillie-Booth, 10/2/52. Edward Duryea Dowling presents Miss Lillie and Reginald Gardiner in limited engagement of summer circuit favorite...In Any Language-Cort, 10/8/52. Jule Styne and George Abbott present new comedy by Edmund Belein and Henry Garson, starring Uta Hagen...The Millionairess-Shubert, 10/17/52. Theatre Guild presents Katharine Hepburn in new comedy by Bernard Shaw.

Digests of Current Reviews

Mr. Pickwick-Plymouth, 9/17/52. Split decision voted by daily critics on Playwrights' Company production of Stanley Young's adaptation of Dickens' "Pickwick Papers." Times, News, Journal American, Eagle and Women's Wear reviewers recommended it as a faithful, humorous, finely acted and directed production. Others panned it for either being too realistic or too far-fetched in its caricatures. George Howe, Nigel Green and Estelle Winwood and others were highly praised while Kathleen Anker's sets and costumes were applauded by all. Staging by John Burrell was subject of diverse opinions. Atkinson, Times, granted director top honors for presenting delightful play. Chapman, News, listed it as affectionate and flavorsome comedy. McClain, Journal American, admitted middle segment sagged but this was compensated by rewarding production of theatre's best attempt at Dickens' characters. Kerr, Herald Tribune, blamed director for driving heart out of play by his determination to be picturesque. Dickens' admirers, Watts, Post, and Coleman, Mirror, were disappointed. Latter blamed director for failing to blend characters into triumphant whole. While former thought script lacked warmth and richness of original. Hawkins, World Telegram-Sun, didn't enjoy episodic monologue script.

Seagulls Over Sorrento-Golden, 9/11/52. Add more mild reviews to critical file of season opener. Charles Bowden and Phillip Langer's production of Hugh Hastings British naval comedy considered a mildly amusing, but hardly adequate comedy, by Hobe, Variety. Cast does reasonably well with anemic material. Francis, Billboard, stuck to his original opinion voiced when he saw play at Westport, Conn, recently, that show should be brought in early in season. Comedy is strictly a "Buy British" product, he notes, with some chuckles and some well written scenes; but the humor is not our brand. J. Pat O'Malley continued to get star billing. Morehouse, WT&S, believes show seemed more fun in summer theatres than on Broadway. Acting and production good deal superior to play, comments Gibbs, New Yorker, which contains slight wit and drama. News magazines didn't cover play.

Rice In London

Eleven plays and eight days in London finds Rice, Post, agreeing with his colleague Watts, Post, that theatre going in London is an event of sheer delight. But the drama editor can get along without trays passing, smoking during theatre, and bars in theatre. Courtesy of theatre workers in London have no equal elsewhere. Though he didn't mind buying programs, Rice does wish they contained more information. Shock of Gertrude Lawrence's death hit everyone in city, Rice noted.

News & Notes

Annamary Dickey will stand by for Constance Carpenter, King and I. Yul Brynner will be elevated to stardom, one of Gertrude Lawrence's last requests...David Alexander, Pal Joey, drama classes featured in Collier's article...Howard Cullman addressed NY Convention and Visitors Bureau board of directors on his plans for new theatre building codes.

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' Cumulative NYC Ratings '

D - Daily W - Weekly M - Monthly B - Broadcast

DT-NY Times	DJC-Journal of Commerce	WCM - Chr. Science Monitor
DH-NY Herald Tribune	DWJ-Wall Street Journal	WC - Commonweal
DN-NY News	DWW-Women's Wear	WCU - Cue
DM-NY Mirror	WB -Billboard	WN - Nation
DC-NY Compass	WV -Variety	WNR - New Republic
DP-NY Post	WCD-Critical Digest	WNS - Newsweek
DJ-NY Journal American	WGN-George Jean Nathan	WNY - New Yorker
DW-NY World Tele-Sun	WWM-Ward Morehouse	WSR - Saturday Review
DB-Brooklyn Eagle	BC -WCBS Bill Leonard	WT - Time
DL-L.I.Press	BL -New Leader-WEVD	MP - Park East

Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them not if they think they will be hits. "So-So" means the critic did not state directly if he recommends the show for an entertaining or stimulating evening.

THE FOURPOSTER-10/24/51	PROS: 29	CON: DH DP WGM WWM BL WC WNY NONE: DWJ WN WNR WSR
GUYS AND DOLLS-11/24/50	PROS: 29	CON: WN
THE KIND AND I-3/29/51	PROS: 29	CON: WN
THE MALE ANIMAL-4/30/52	PROS: 27	NONE: WGN MP WNR
THE MOON IS BLUE-3/8/51	PROS: 26	CON: WCD WGN NONE: WN MP
MRS. McTHING-2/20/52	PROS: 19	CON: DM DJ BC DL WNR WT WGN BL NONE: WNR MP
PAL JOEY-1/3/52	PROS: 25	CON: BL NONE: WNR
NEW FACES OF 1952-5/16/52	PROS: 25	CON: DP WT WGN NONE: WN WNR
A NIGHT IN VENICE-6/26/52	PROS: 20	CON: DC WSR NONE: WGN WNR BC WT MP
POINT OF NO RETURN-12/13/51	PROS: 25	CON: DW BL WN WNR WT
SOUTH PACIFIC-4/7/49	PROS: 29	CON: WT
TOP BANANA-11/1/51	PROS: 23	CON: DP DJ BL NONE: WCM WN WWR WSR
WISH YOU WERE HERE-6/25/52	PROS: DN DC DB DL DJC WV BL NONE: DWW WCD WGN BC WCM WN WNR MP CON: DT DH DM DP DJ DW DWJ WB WWM WC WCU WNS WT WNY WSR	
SEAGULLS OVER SORRENTO-9/11/52	PRO: DM DW CON: DT DN DP DC DJ DB DH	

' Vaudeville '

Holiday to feature new edition of Michael Rose's Capers weekly, using different comedians, singers, dancers and specialty acts. New motion picture will also be shown weekly...Palace to continue with eight act vaudeville and film until suitable headliner signed for two a day appearances...Florence Rogge, Radio City Music Hall associate producer, resigning, Margaret Sande to take over as ballet mistress...Roxy new stage policy to feature guest dance directors. Benny Fields and Blossom Seeley to appear opening day of "Somebody Loves Me" with Friars Club members appearing throughout the first week. Jean Carroll, Ray Malone, Danny Lewis and Mills Brothers head new Paramount show...Radio City Music Hall revue "Iridescence" held over ninth week with "Ivanhoe."

Current Roxy stage show received mild reviews from trade paper reporters who considered show a fill-in until new policy gets underway. Ice show with Hawaiian motif received top billing, with George de Witt and Kyle MacDonell sharing praise.

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' Green Room Department '

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BURNSIDE OBIT...Hippodrome producer R.H. Burnside, who died at age 82, was last of great directors who started at turn of century who ruled with an iron hand, recalls Laurie, Variety...Herald Tribune editorial remembers with joy the spectacles he helped produce. Today children find their entertainment in the theatre via other means. It is hoped that the march of progress will uncover something half as good to take its place.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...ANTA's new policy is an attempt to cure theatre ills by words, pans Pollock, Compass...Beatrice Lillie shouldn't try to provide full evening's entertainment by herself, insists NBC Pearson...Watts, Post, shudders to think critics have been wrecking the theatre by not dressing properly, as Chapman, News, implied. Bernard Shaw will be Number One Playwright of 1952-53 season predicts Morehouse, WT&S.

CRITICS & FRIENDS...People who claim that reviewers praise friends, whether or not they do good work, reckon without the notable size of the critical ego, Watts, Post, explains. Critics would rather be guilty of betraying friendships than of being exposed as incompetents in what they consider an important job. Reviewers often may be harder on friends in their move to be completely objective.

MAIL BOX...Show business people for political office urged by Edward Bodin to Billboard. Peggy Wood explains in Herald Tribune that reader was wrong in believing stagehands require two people backstage for every one on stage...Group of Japanese Americans inform Pollock, Compass, that New Playwrights' Wedding in Japan was an unfair representation of Japanese people.

7:00 PM CURTAIN ODE...I love to see a play at seven:
It doesn't end at half past eleven:
No curtain rises close to nine
For people who've been late to dine:
No second act in it begins
With folks still tramping on my shins,
And when it's over, oh, what bliss!
Nobody asks "What day is this?" - Phillips, WT&S

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...Halliwell Hobbes, The Male Animal, finds his face is so familiar to the public that affectionate if puzzled greetings frequently take place on the street, he told Hawkins, WT&S...Hugh Hastings, Seagulls Over Sorrento, author, wrote nine plays before his play was tried by a London theatre club, Sheaffer, Eagle, learned. Producers by-passed his play for two years, but rushed to sign when they saw the club production.

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' Theatre News Round Up '

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A Night in Venice 1953 premiere at Jones Beach Marine Stadium already set by Mike Todd for June 25th...The Millionairess opening postponed to October 17th...J.J.Shubert brought suit against Association of Theatrical Press Agents and Managers, the Teamsters Unions, Local 817 and eight theatrical truckers, charging them with violation of Sherman Anti-Trust Act, McCord, Herald Tribune, reports...Greater New York Chapter of ANTA to honor Clarence Derwent at October 26th dinner at Waldorf Astoria...Friars Club to honor Benny Fields and Blossom Seeley at house party...Howard Lindsay spoke in Pittsburgh in Council of Living Theatre campaign...Sammy Schwartz subbed for Sam Levine, Guys and Dolls,..Jose Ferrer to produce plays and musicals in London for Jack Hylton...Oscar Hammerstein II overhauled second act of Allegro, produced at Lambertsville, NJ, in line with critics' suggestions.

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' Random Drama Notes '

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FILMS..."On Your Toes" to be refilmed by Warner's..."The Devil's Disciple" to be filmed by Gabriel Pascal...Paramount's "Reaching for Stars" to include Sardi props... Betty O'Neil, Pal Joey, screen tested by 20th Century Fox...Guys and Dolls producers must set price on film sale due to agreement with Paramount...Ethel Merman considering lead in "There is No Business like Show Business" film by 20th Century Fox, for which Irving Berlin is doing score...Stanley Kramer's "The Member of the Wedding" uses original Broadway cast...Seagulls over Sorrento author, Hugh Hastings, scripted two British films "The Gift Horse" and "It Started in Paradise"...Italian film producer making satire of Laurence Olivier's Shakespeare film entitled "I, Hamlet."...Douglas Watson makes screen debut in MGM "Julius Caesar."

BOOKS..."Hopalong-Freud Rides Again" by Ira Wallach published by Henry Schuman... Ralph Kettering writing biography of Al Woods...Ezio Pinza titled his autobiography "Across a Crowded World," to be published by Doubleday...Deems Taylor called his autobiography, due in 1953, "Some Enchanted Evenings"...Nat Dorfman planning to write biography of A. Toxen Worm, famed theatrical press agent...Viking to publish Eva Le Gallienne's "Plus 20," a continuation of her first biographical book "At 33."...Lionel Barrymore working on his first novel..."The Intelligent Readers' Guide to George Bernard Shaw" course given at NYU by Ellis St.Joseph...Kronenberger, Time, author of survey of English stage comedy published by Knopf entitled "Threat of Laughter."

RECORDS...Eartha Kitt, New Faces of 1952, recorded her songs from revue for RCA... Original cast album of Walt Disney's "Peter Pan" to be released by RCA...Leroy Anderson completing his score for My Sister Eileen musical, due next season with Rosalind Russell Second pressing of RCA album "New Faces of 1952" ordered...Several parts of Richard Rodgers' "Victory at Sea" background music for NBC TV series, to be recorded...Elias, Compass, reminds that several Gertrude Lawrence records available, including: Decca's The King and I album, Decca's "Gertrude Lawrence Album," group of seven songs she made famous.

TV & RADIO...William Saroyan's Jim Dandy to be produced this fall on WOR TV Broadway Theatre..."The Big Payoff" show hunting famous theatrical props...Charles Laughton's readings from classic to be broadcast weekly...Pioneer Playhouse of Louisville, Ky, production of Ghosts filmed by Normandy Productions for TV showing...Jack Cassidy, Wish You Were Here, signed for 15 minute weekly TV series...NBC "Best Plays," with Chapman, News, as narrator, switched to Friday at 8:30 EST...CBS TV to present Life with Father series staged by Ezra Stone...WOR TV Broadway Theatre considering plans to send shows on tour of out of town TV stations...First Drama Quartette members to sole in CBS radio "Suspense" series...Union dispute cancelled theatre TV production of A Night in Venice.

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' Legit Stuff '

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Long Island Rail Road to offer reduced fares for theatre goers attending shows with 7:00 PM Monday curtains starting October 6th...Unusual survey discloses that two shows which stuck to 8:30 PM Monday curtain, New Faces of 1952 and Top Banana, showed higher increase than shows that switched...Shuberts to run Gayety Theatre, Washington, DC, as the Sam S. Shubert Memorial.

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